COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

IMPLEMENTATION TEAM CONFERENCE CALL

June 20, 2003

FACILITATOR'S SUMMARY

The following notes are a summary of the issues discussed at this meeting and follow-up issues.

Ice Harbor Summer Juvenile Survival Study:

Today's IT conference call was convened to discuss the design of the summer spill test at Ice Harbor Dam, an issue that was elevated from SCT. An issue paper was prepared by SCT chair Bill Hevlin, NOAA Fisheries, plus a summary of past summer spill survival research results and SRWG discussions of 2003 summer spill test options at Ice Harbor from the COE were circulated before today's conference call.

Jim Ruff, NOAA Fisheries, gave an overview of the issue. He noted that SCT was not able to reach consensus on survival studies at Ice Harbor during the June 19 SCT meeting. The State of Oregon SCT representative elevated the issue to IT after the SCT meeting, so the issue statement did not come from SCT, but instead was prepared by NOAA Fisheries at Oregon's request. The issue as stated was whether the second of two spill treatment conditions at Ice Harbor Dam this summer should be a no spill design or a standard (spread-out across the spillway) 2000 Biological Opinion (BiOp) spill schedule. Tony Nigro, Oregon, presented a third option: consideration of only a concentrated, or bulked up, BiOp spill treatment in 2-3 spillbays that would be implemented and tested over the 21-day study period, which could then be compared to previous years' spill survival research. NOAA Science Center researcher Brad Eppard stated that, based on the number of PIT-tags and expected number of test fish available to be collected at Lower Monumental, the study was designed to be able to detect a 5% difference in survival between the two treatments. The rationale for the concentrated, bulked up spill treatment option was previously proposed and discussed at a 6/13/03 SRWG meeting and at the 6/19/03 SCT meeting.

Jim Athearn, COE, commented that the full powerhouse treatment (under a no spill condition) would provide other valuable information that the COE feels is important. For this reason, the COE preferred including a no spill treatment as part of the study. Montana noted a reluctance to try a new spill alternative (the bulked up option) without full discussion and a carefully thought through research plan. After further discussion, Jim Ruff said that he did not hear any advocacy for the standard, spread out BiOp spill treatment option, so he suggested that the issue before IT is whether to initiate a bulk spill only treatment or to also include the no spill powerhouse option as part of the summer test at Ice Harbor. Suzanne Cooper, BPA, suggested that the overall objective is to maximize project survival, which will require empirical data on passage through the powerhouse. Therefore, determining how well summer migrating fish pass through the Ice Harbor powerhouse is important and we currently don't have that information, she said.

Bill Tweit, Washington, noted his skepticism about changing study designs in-season, especially if the changes are contentious. However, considering that the spread-out BiOp spill treatment option is no longer on the table, he said he 'leaned toward' Oregon's desired bulk spill treatment only for this study. This option, he felt, was closest to the original line of logic.

Rob Lothrop, CRITFC, expressed concern with doing a turbine study "on the fly" without a well thought out study design to obtain the necessary precision in results. He said the bulk spill option appears to make sense based on today's discussions with IT and internal CRITFC discussions.

It was pointed out that tagging fish now is necessary because the subyearling fall chinook migration is early this year and is well underway. Concern was expressed about being able to collect adequate numbers of test fish if the study was delayed any longer.

ACTION: Members of IT agreed that study precision is important to obtain valid study results and that it is important to begin tagging fish as soon as possible to ensure that the expected study precision can be achieved. The group also agreed that, unless there was a need for further discussion amongst IT on Monday, NOAA Fisheries and the COE would first check with the researchers to verify whether adequate numbers of test fish could be collected and PIT-tagged to achieve the expected study precision, and then make the decision on the study treatments for this summer and inform IT members of the basis of that decision.

NOTE: Further discussions between NOAA Fisheries, the COE and NW Science Center researchers confirmed that adequate numbers of test fish could be collected and tagged to provide the expected study precision for two study treatments. A decision was then made late on 6/20/03 to implement a two treatment summer survival study at Ice Harbor Dam, with one treatment being the concentrated, or bulk, BiOp spill option and the other treatment being no spill powerhouse passage in an alternating two-day block study design. A June 20th e-mail from Jim Ruff explains the basis for that decision.